

## CLAIMS

1. A method of using a virtual business model to transact business for a product, comprising:

providing a plurality of virtual alliances for the manufacture and distribution of the product;

providing a plurality of virtual flows for enabling electronic communication between the plurality of virtual alliances for use in the manufacture and distribution of the product;

providing a contracting business for coordination among the virtual alliances; and

using the contracting business to establish, via the virtual flows, control over the manufacture and distribution of the product by the plurality of virtual alliances.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing the plurality of virtual alliances includes providing a material alliance.

3. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing the plurality of virtual alliances includes providing a manufacturer alliance.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing the plurality of virtual alliances includes providing a warehouse alliance.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing the plurality of virtual flows includes providing a material and product flow.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing the plurality of virtual flows includes providing an information flow.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing the plurality of virtual flows includes providing a financial flow.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein the using the contracting business includes establishing configurable control points in the information flow for facilitating communications by the contracting business.

9. The method of claim 6, further including establishing virtual regional hubs on the information flow for coordinating the manufacture and distribution of the product for customers in particular geographic locations.

10. The method of claim 1 wherein the providing the plurality of virtual flows includes providing financial and information flows, and further including using the financial flow integrated with the information flow to automatically trigger financial transactions relating to the manufacture and distribution of the product.

11. A virtual business model to transact business for a product, comprising:  
a plurality of virtual alliances for the manufacture and distribution of the product;  
a plurality of virtual flows for enabling electronic communication between the  
plurality of virtual alliances for use in the manufacture and distribution of the product; and  
a contracting business for coordination among the virtual alliances, wherein the  
contracting business establishes, via the virtual flows, control over the manufacture and  
distribution of the product by the plurality of virtual alliances.

12. The virtual business model of claim 11 wherein the plurality of virtual alliances  
includes a material alliance.

13. The virtual business model of claim 11 wherein the plurality of virtual alliances  
includes a manufacturer alliance.

14. The virtual business model of claim 11 wherein the plurality of virtual alliances  
includes a warehouse alliance.

15. The virtual business model of claim 11 wherein the plurality of virtual flows includes  
a material and product flow.

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16. The virtual business model of claim 11 wherein the plurality of virtual flows includes an information flow.

17. The virtual business model of claim 11 wherein the plurality of virtual flows includes a financial flow.

18. The virtual business model of claim 11, further including configurable control points in the information flow for facilitating communications by the contracting business.

19. The virtual business model of claim 16, further including virtual regional hubs on the information flow for coordinating the manufacture and distribution of the product for customers in particular geographic locations.

20. The virtual business model of claim 11 wherein the plurality of virtual flows includes financial and information flows, and further including financial transactions automatically triggered by the financial flow, integrated with the information flow, and relating to the manufacture and distribution of the product.

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